

NEWS *from the National Wildlife Refuge System*

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NEW FISHING AND HUNTING PROGRAMS ADDED TO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has added new fishing and hunting programs on national wildlife refuges, offering sportsmen more opportunities to cast for lunkers on lake or stream, or enjoy the sights and sounds of a wild marsh while poised in a duck blind.

The five new fishing and hunting programs bring the total number of refuge fishing programs to 293 and the total number of hunting programs to 287. These totals are out of the 511 refuges that make up the 92-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's largest and most diverse network of lands and waters dedicated to wildlife.

"National wildlife refuges offer some of the most outstanding ways for American's to enjoy the outdoors, and I'm pleased to announce more opportunities for those who pursue recreational fishing and hunting," said Jamie Rappaport Clark, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

New refuge fishing programs:

- ▶ Colorado: Rocky Mountain Arsenal, near Denver (currently being operated as a national wildlife refuge while pending formal transfer from the military). Largemouth bass, channel catfish, northern pike, and bluegill fishing beginning in 1999.
- ▶ Louisiana: Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge, near Monroe. Bass, bream, and crappie fishing.

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AMERICA'S NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES...
where wildlife comes naturally!

- ▶ Nebraska: Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge, in the north-central area of the state. Fishing at Fort Niobrara and nearby Valentine National Wildlife Refuge includes trophy bluegill and northern pike (many consider it the best in the state), perch, and largemouth bass fishing.

New refuge hunting programs:

- ▶ Florida: Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge, near Naples. Duck and coot hunting.
- ▶ Texas: Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, near Austin. Turkey, white-tailed deer, and feral hog hunting.

The Fish and Wildlife Service annually reviews fishing and hunting programs on national wildlife refuges to determine whether additional programs should be added or whether existing programs should be modified. Regulations governing fishing and hunting programs ensure compatibility with individual refuge purposes, proper management of fish and wildlife, protection of other refuge values, and public safety.

Expanding fishing and hunting opportunities on the National Wildlife Refuge System implements two Executive Orders signed by President Clinton. One, on management and public use of the Refuge System, outlines priority public uses, which are fishing, hunting, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. An Executive Order on Recreational Fisheries requires agencies to increase recreational fishing opportunities on federal lands. Thirty-five new fishing programs and 27 new hunting programs have been initiated under the Clinton Administration to date.

The Fish and Wildlife Service published a final rule on the new fishing and hunting programs on national wildlife refuges in the September 9, 1997 *Federal Register*.

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Begun in 1903 by President Theodore Roosevelt, the National Wildlife Refuge System now includes 511 refuges and 38 wetland management districts in all 50 states and U.S. territories. Of the 30 million annual visitors to the Refuge System, 7 million fish and hunt, while others enjoy activities such as birdwatching, hiking, and nature photography. Hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren visit national wildlife refuges each year to study nature and the environment.

For more information on the National Wildlife Refuge System, call 1-800-344-WILD; visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's homepage at www.fws.gov and click on National Wildlife Refuge System; or better yet, visit a national wildlife refuge.